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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /059 W
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R 141419Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1346
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 8451

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TU
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION FACTION IN RPP MAKES GAIN

1. THE PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES OF BULENT ECEVIT'S REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) RECENTLY REJECTED THE ECEVIT-APPROVED INCUMBENT CANDIDATE FOR THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, ELECTING INSTEAD ALI NECAT OLCEN, WHO WAS SUPPORTED BY ECEVIT'S OPPONENTS IN THE PARTY. ALTHOUGH THE RPP DEPUTIES' DISSATISFACTION WITH THE INCUMBENT'S PERFORMANCE APPARENTLY WAS A MAJOR FACTOR IN OLCEN'S ELECTION, THE OUTCOME IS REGARDED WITHIN THE PARTY AS THE FIRST GAIN OF ANY KIND FOR ECEVIT'S OPPONENTS SINCE THEIR DEFEAT IN LAST YEAR'S PARTY CONGRESS.

2. ALEV COSKUN, PARTY SPOKESMAN AND A MEMBER OF ECEVIT'S INNER CIRCLE, COMMENTED TO US THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP CHAIRMANSHIP, WHILE AFFORDING PROMINENCE AND PUBLICITY, PERMITS LITTLE INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION TO ITS HOLDER. COSKUN NOTED THAT OLCEN WAS UNLIKELY TO EVERPLAY HIS HAND, AND THAT IN ANY EVENT OPPOSITION WAS TOLERABLE SO LONG AS PARTY DISCIPLINE WAS MAINTAINED. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID, "IF THEY (THE OPPOSITION MEMBERS) BEGAN GOING AROUND ANATOLIA SPREADING THEIR VIEWS
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AS THE PARTY'S VIEWS, THEN WE WOULD HAVE TROUBLE IN THE PARTY."

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COSKUN POINTED OUT THAT A BASIC OBSTACLE TO ECEVIT'S OPPONENTS IN THE PARTY WAS ECEVIT'S STRENGTH AS A VOTE-GETTER FOR THE PARTY. UNTIL THEY COULD FIND AN ALTERNATIVE LEADER, HE PREDICTED, THE OPPOSITION FACTION WOULD REMAIN A MINORITY.

3. OLCEN DOES NOT RPT NOT APPEAR TO REPRESENT AN ALTERNATIVE TO ECEVIT. HE TOLD US AFTER HIS ELECTION THAT HE HIMSELF IS NOT RPT NOT PART OF THE OPPOSITION FACTION. HOWEVER, HE SAID, HE DOES WANT THE PARTY TO STATE WHAT IT STANDS FOR IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TERMS AND TO DISCUSS THIS POSITION OPENLY AND FREQUENTLY. HE IS DISSATISIFIED WITH WHAT HE REGARDS AS THE PARTY'S EXCESSIVE CONCERN WITH MAINTAINING THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD AND AVOIDING DEBATE ON BASIC IDEAS. NOW 52 AND IN HIS FIRST TERM IN PARLIA-MENT, OLCEN HAS AN UNUSUAL BACKGROUND: HE STUDIED AT ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY WITH PRIMIN DEMIREL AND DEPUTY PRIMIN ERBAKAN ("WE ALL WENT DIFFERENT WAYS", HE TOLD US) AND WORKED TWELVE YEARS AS AN ENGINEER BEFORE SWITCHING TO ECONOMICS, WHICH HESTUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KIEL. HE TAUGHT ECONOMICS AT HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY BRIEFLY, THEN WORKED IN THE STATE PLANNING ORGANIZATION. HE TOLD US HE ENTERED POLITICS BECAUSE "THAT IS WHERE THE MACRO DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT OUR ECONOMIC LIFE". HE RECENTLY PUBLISHED A BOOK ON "THE PEOPLE'S SECTOR". A MUCH MENTIONED BUT LITTLE UNDERSTOOD RPP ECONOMIC CONCEPT.

4. COMMENT: THE RPP IS NOT AN EASY PARTY FOR A LEADER TO DOMINATE. FOR ONE, IT SEEMS TO ATTRACT MORE THAN ITS SHARE OF AMBITIOUS AND ABLE MEN WHO CARRYON A CONTINUAL STRUGGLE FOR POSITION WITHIN THE PARTY. FOR ANOTHER, ITS LEFT WING STILL NOURISHES HOPES OF CAPTURING THE PARTY AS A VEHICLE FOR ITS IDEOLOGY. HOWEVER, WHILE ECEVIT APPARENTLY CANNOT MAINTAIN AS TIGHT CONTROL ON THE RPP AS DEMIREL KEEPS ON HIS JUSTICE PARTY, ECEVIT'S POSITION AS LEADER SEEMS QUITE SECURE: HE HAS NO RPT NO CURRENT RIVALS IN THE PARTY AND HIS INFLUENCE IS EX-TREMELY STRONG. OLCEN'S ELECTION PROBABLY REPRESENTS A MANAGEABLE PROBLEM FOR HIM RATHER THAN A SERIOUS CHALLENGE. THE MAIN IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF OLCEN'S ELECTION IS LIKELY TO BE ON THE PARTY'S INTERNAL COMPETITION BELOW ECEVIT'S LEVEL. ANOTHER POSSIBLE EFFECT, IF OLCEN HAS HIS WAY, MAY BE THAT THE RPP WILL BECOME A SOMEWHAT MORE OUTSPOKEN ADVOCATE OF LEFT-OF-CENTER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FORMULAS.
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